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ABSTRACT

With new options for adoption, increasing numbers of children born out of wedlock, and higher incidence of divorce, the composition of the American family is changing. This monograph reviews the process of family change as it relates to the teacher's and school's role in helping children to cope with the adjustments family change impose. The emotional, mental, and financial stresses of parents and children are briefly discussed as they arise in the following problem areas: (1) single-parent families; (2) separation and divorce; (3) adjustment problems of children experiencing family change; (4) legal issues in the family change process; (5) adjustment problems of children relating to legal issues in the family change process; (6) step-parenting; and (7) adjustment problems to step-parenting. Suggestions are made for teachers and other school personnel to help children cope with these problems. Resources and references are included. (JD)

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America's Changing Families: A Guide for Educators

Karen W. Appel

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America's Changing Families: A Guide for Educators

by
Karen W. Appel

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Introduction

Change is the norm for today's American family. With new options for adoption, increasing numbers of children born out of wedlock, and a dramatically higher incidence of divorce, the composition of families is changing. Divorce is often the initiating event in this ongoing process of change. When a marriage dissolves, the family is headed by a single parent, but often there is a remarriage of one or both parents.

The population of children involved in family change has more than doubled in the past 25 years. Today, several million children live with a divorced parent. It is estimated that one-third of children born in the 1980s will live in a single-parent family for a period of time before reaching the age of 18. The stereotypical American family, composed of a mother and father and two children residing together, is fast being displaced by single-parent households, usually headed by a female.

Some are alarmed that the American family is breaking apart; others take a more realistic view toward new family patterns where success is measured by the relationships of family members and by how they manage the events in their lives, not whether they are made up of a mother, father, and two children.

The issues raised by family change are being examined by educators, clergy, and other professionals. More support groups for adults are being formed, child support legislation is being enacted, and public awareness is growing. Media coverage of family change on television and in movies, books, and magazines is extensive. However, divorce, single parenting, and step-parenting tend to be treated as separate events rather than as stages in a complex and ongoing process experienced by most children and their families. Furthermore, suggestions for recogniz-

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ing children's adjustments to these changes and what to do about them are missing.

Ideally, developing positive attitudes in children about family change should be the responsibility of their parents. However, most parents do not want to think about the adjustments this kind of change might bring. They find the issues difficult to discuss and often minimize the effects of family change on their children. Even those who want to offer support to a child experiencing family change – especially teachers – do not know what to do.

Educators need to understand better the continuing adjustments children face as they experience the process of family change. With greater awareness and sensitivity, teachers who work closely with these children can provide needed support.

The purpose of this fastback is to review the process of family change as it relates to the teacher's and school's role in helping children to cope with the adjustments family change imposes. As educators understand the components of this process, they will become more adept at recognizing the behavioral indicators of a child's adjustment to family change. Finally, guidelines are suggested for the sensitive guidance role educators can perform to support children coping with family changes.

Single-Parent Families

While you're coping, making $800 a month before taxes and spending $120 of it for child care and $300 on rent, there's not a whole lot left. It's a hand-to-mouth existence.

—A recently divorced mother

A wide variety of single-parent families exist. Those headed by females, either divorced or unmarried, are most prevalent; but some homes are headed by a father. The ending of a two-parent family and beginning of a single-parent family is a major alteration in the pattern and meaning of a child's life. The absence of one parent may be a major contributing factor to such problems as low achievement, personal maladjustment, and delinquency.

One of the major adjustments for single-parent families is living within the constraints of a severely reduced income — as much as 70% less in some cases. Often child support payments are not enough to meet financial obligations, thus requiring a single parent to work. A parent who has worked all day comes home tired. And the more children there are at home, the greater are the emotional resources required of the parent. Single parents have no substitutes. Many times they are torn between their many roles as parent, career person, self, homeowner, and community citizen, not to mention lover.

Successful single parents learn to adjust to the changes in the family at their own pace and in their own way. As single parents come to accept the loss of the former spouse, they begin to broaden their base of friendship and seek out relationships with others. A problem facing many

single parents is finding time for the relationship and finding someone with whom they have something in common.

Live-in lovers in a family often lead to problems for children. Children are aware that society does not sanction such living arrangements. Children over the age of eight sense that it isn't right and often express the wish that their parent will marry the lover. Teenagers, once they acknowledge that their parents are sexual beings, are more accepting of the situation. Often, however, intense feelings of rivalry arise, especially if the lover also has children in his or her custody.

For many children, seeing their parents in roles of romantic love and courtship incites feelings of jealousy. One 14-year-old boy streaked stark naked through the living room when a male friend of his mother's was visiting, because he didn't want her to go out with him. Another teenage son waited up for his mother and gave her a stern lecture about coming home on time from a date.

Children need guidance in assessing new situations that arise in a changing family. When time to choose whether or not to move in with his dad was approaching, a 13-year-old boy told his mother that his dad must be trying to brainwash him. His father was becoming more generous, offering him new downhill skis and boots, as well as a new bedroom set. Parents, for their own sake and the sake of their children, must be careful not to let their children manipulate them with the ploy of favors and gifts from the former spouse.

Financial and practical needs might also place new responsibilities on children in single-parent families. Children might have to take on household tasks such as making their own lunch, helping to clean the house, or assisting with younger siblings. Some older children may need to get babysitting jobs, maintain yards, or get paper routes in order to pay for their own clothing and school activities.

Whatever choices are made, for the single-parent family to run smoothly, each child will have to assume additional responsibilities to balance out the family work load. This is especially true when a mother returns to work or when the father assumes custody.

Separation and Divorce

My choice to get the divorce came before my choice to go back to school. I left a large house in a small Wyoming town, went back to school, and lived in married student housing with my four children for two years. When I look back on it now, I don't know how I did it; but at the time it was what had to be done, and it was what I could afford to do.

—Mother of four preschool children

Separation-divorce is a process with many stages. When a couple's emotional relationship starts to deteriorate, the divorce process begins. When parents start living in different residences, reasons for the separation are fixed and legal blame is determined. The property is divided and financial arrangements are made, including financial support for the children. Also, legal decisions are made about custody and visitation. The community, if it did not already know, now becomes aware of the divorce. Customary friendships and social patterns no longer operate in the same way as they did when the family was intact. The adults in the family begin the process of becoming single, forming new living patterns, new values, and new relationships. Children usually find this a time of confusion and disruption. Often there is decreased guidance and little nurturing.

Families experience change in a variety of ways. For some, the impact is sudden and drastic. In the space of several weeks parents can separate and move, and children find themselves with one parent in a

different house, attending a new school. For most families the shift is more gradual. There may be several separations and reconciliations before the final separation occurs. Or the children may remain in their homes with the custodial parent and attend the same school. Whatever the history, a child usually has no choice about family change. While one or both parents may view the divorce and the resulting changes as positive, their children may view the same events negatively.

Because of the emotional demands divorce imposes, many parents are less aware of signs of pain and stress exhibited by their children. It is not unusual for them to be insensitive to the emotional needs of their children. As a form of compensation, a parent will make fewer demands on children. They are also less likely to solicit children's opinions or to explain to them what is happening. This can be an especially difficult period for children since they are experiencing so many new and different patterns resulting from mothers going to work and fathers being absent from the home or vice versa.

While all children of divorce experience these changes, how they react depends on their temperament, past experiences, parental guidance, and age. Adolescents are more able to find relief from their situation outside the home than are younger children. Boys are inclined to be more sensitive to family change and to react more strongly, although the reasons for this are unclear. Besides personal and emotional considerations, the child's life is further changed by economics, by changes in family functions, and by changes in the interaction patterns with those individuals and institutions that form the social network for the family.

Many children are distressed by marital dissolution because they feel a loss of the nurturing and protection the family provided them before the divorce. Often they have no idea a divorce is impending. Although they are not responsible for the divorce and the resulting changes that occur in the family, children frequently will experience feelings of guilt over the loss of the original family. It is common for children to go through the stages of the grief process – denial, anger, bargaining, and depression – before accepting the reality of divorce.

For many children, the school represents the only consistent source of support during the divorce process. The daily school routine provides needed structure. If teachers recognize the dynamics of the single-parent

family and provide understanding and support during the separation and divorce process, then children experiencing family change will find it much easier to adjust to the disruption in their lives.

Absence of the Father

The major frustration I have being the single parent and having four children is being so divided and always feeling like I'm a piece of pie . . . and there has to be this piece for this child, this piece to get the dishes done, and this piece for work, and this piece to do the laundry, and, you know, a big half for Mommy and a big half for teacher — sometimes the piece that gets left over for me is a very tiny single sliver. Yes, I have felt guilty when the house is a mess, about not doing enough for my teaching, and I've resented being cut up into pieces — and so I'll end up resenting all of them if there's not any time for me. I could use a "wife"; I could use someone who takes care of all these things.

—A teacher and mother of four young children

When a mother becomes the sole head of the household, time becomes a precious commodity. Because of this, children assume more responsibility and take a more prominent role in family decision making. Sometimes when children are given greater independence, they do get into trouble; and people are prone to put the blame on the father-absent home.

Divorced fathers and mothers react differently toward their children. Mothers tend to be more restrictive and use more negative sanctions with their children. They often feel their children do not appreciate what has been done for them. These behaviors are especially prevalent during the first year after divorce, but gradually they yield to more positive approaches to discipline problems. Mother-child relationships improve.

The vast majority of single-parent families in the U.S. are headed by women. Many, especially those under 30, do remarry; so the father-absent home is a temporary situation. For those who are over 30, however, a greater number will remain single.

Women who are educated and have a career with some social status report more successful relationships with their children than do those in

lower socioeconomic circumstances. Those mothers who depend on welfare and have minimal job skills report feeling controlled by the welfare agencies and being scapegoats for their children.

Absence of the Mother

When he was separated from his mother, it was a shock to me, it was a shock to him. I never really talked to him about it. Even though he was only 22 months old, there should have been something said. At first it was very difficult dealing with a lot of stereotypes about what is a parent and what is a father and a mother . . . you have to be more mother-like as a single-parent father than you might normally expect to be.

—A single-parent father

In recent years fathers have been taking a more active role in child rearing. This is due, in part, to the growing awareness of the value of the father's parental influence and also to the increasing number of mothers of young children entering the work force. Although the percentage is small, the courts are allowing more fathers to gain custody of their children when divorce occurs.

When the mother leaves the home, children sometimes see this as a rejection of them because mother must not love them if she left. It is harder for a child to accept the loss of a mother's love because society tells us that if our mother doesn't love us, then we must be unlovable. Because of these feelings, there can be special problems in a motherless home, even if the father does provide lots of nuturing.

More men are raising their children alone today. Custodial fathers report that neighbors and co-workers are supportive of them and express admiration for them as heads of households. In addition, they report that teachers respect them. Their children seem to appreciate what their fathers have done for them rather than taking them for granted, as is frequently reported by mothers in similar circumstances.

Single-parent fathers are faced with many of the same adjustments as mothers. Time is at a premium. Costs of child care can strain the budget; arranging dates can be difficult; and feelings of loneliness are common.

The major role adjustments faced by single-parent fathers relate to home management and child care, while mothers' adjustments relate more to re-entering the employment market and balancing the budget. Both have less time for parenting. For fathers, the crucial factor is whether the father *chooses* to be the custodial parent. Fathers who freely choose to be the head of the household generally adjust more readily.

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Adjustment Problems of Children Experiencing Family Change

Adjusting to divorce and the resulting family change is a multidimensional process for children. They cannot be protected from the pain of divorce, but they can be helped to adjust to family change and to accept the fact that the family will never be the same again. In some cases, the animosity between a mother and father is so intense that their children come to view the divorce with a sense of relief.

Children's primary sources of support come from their immediate family and the school they attend. When divorce occurs, a child's support network of home, neighborhood, friends, and school is often disrupted. Without the presence of unconditional love, guidance, and help, children are ill-prepared to cope with change and loss. However, if during the family change process there is a supportive relationship with both parents and with close relatives and consistent discipline from the custodial parent with a healthy environment for discussion and problem solving, then a child will be much more likely to adjust to divorce.

The greatest trauma occurs in those families where one of the parents does not want a divorce. If parents are so distraught emotionally as to be unable to cope, then they should seek temporary surrogate parenting help from friends, relatives, day-care staff, or teachers. They must ask for help and must be assured that it is acceptable to ask for help. Teachers are in a key position to know when help is needed. Following are some indicators that should alert teachers to problems children face in changing families.

Grief. A student may express grief in many different ways. Grieving time can be long or short depending on the needs and experiences of a

child. For some, grieving may have ended by the time a teacher becomes aware that a family change has occurred. Yet the children must experience grief; it cannot be denied or it will resurface again and again. Behavioral indicators during this period of mourning may include lack of sleep, loneliness, greater need for reinforcement, increased dependency, poor memory, confusion, guilt, anger, and bitterness. Some students may exhibit all of these reactions, others none at all.

Frequent Illness. Complaints of stomachaches, headaches, and requests to go to the school nurse's office are common symptoms. However, when these symptoms occur frequently, stress may be the real cause.

Changes in Personal Habits. Changes in manner of dress, grooming habits, work habits, and frequent tardiness are all indicators of problems at home.

Wide Mood Swings. Crying for no apparent reason, unprovoked spurts of anger, anxiety for no apparent cause, and sometimes unexplained euphoria are indicators related to the emotional confusion experienced because of family change.

Role Changes. Children sometimes assume new roles as a result of family change. Three common role patterns are the placater, the adjuster, and the troublemaker. Whatever the role, in the mind of the child it is an effort to get the family back together. The placater assumes the role of holding the family together. He is often the "man of the house." These children provide guidance and nurturing for siblings and sometimes even the parent. They try to be perfect at home and school. Because they are so good, teachers sometimes don't realize there is an adjustment problem to deal with. The adjusters will do what is needed to maintain a balance in their lives. If they are called on to be the clown, they will do it. If they need to work hard, they will. And if they need to seek negative attention, they will. The troublemaker is the child most often associated with divorce. These children cope by seeking negative attention because, in most instances, it is the only attention they receive.

Suggestions for Teachers

There are many supportive responses that a teacher can give children experiencing problems with family change.

Acknowledge the Pain. The younger children are, the more open their expressions of grief and pain. Children may cry when something happens that reminds them of the family change. Reassure these children with a statement such as, "This must be painful for you," "You must be hurting," "This is a lonely experience," "These are hard times for you," or any other message that establishes a bond of understanding between teacher and child.

Deal with Denial. The older children are, the less likely they are to admit emotional pain. Problems cannot be dealt with until they are acknowledged. Teachers can help adolescents acknowledge that they are hurting when things are not going well in their changing family. Being a teenager can itself be a lonely experience, but is even more lonely when problems are denied.

Positive Affirmation. Children who are experiencing family change often are "touchy" for no apparent reason. By being sensitive to their reactions, a teacher can offer a hug, a pat, or an encouraging note to affirm the student's validity. Such statements as "I'm glad you're in school today," "Class isn't the same without you," and "You always count with me," say to children that they are special.

Deal Directly with the Family Change Process. If you have personally experienced divorce as a child or adult, tell children what to expect in an objective manner. You can say, "This was my experience" or "This is what students usually go through." Let them know you can go into more detail when they are ready for more information. If a student is sad, confused, or tearful, they need to know that this is normal behavior and that these feelings will pass. By being aware of some of the stress that normally comes with family change, students can learn to deal with such stress.

Universal Feelings. Children who are experiencing family change often feel that no one understands what they are experiencing or how they feel. A teacher can let students know that others care about them and that others have experienced many of the same feelings. Reading a short story about family change can stimulate valuable informal discussion among students. Such stories also provide an opportunity to introduce vocabulary relating to family change, such as divorce, custody, and visitation. Stories about children in single-parent homes and life in

changing families should be available in all classrooms (see "Books for Children" in Resources). By acknowledging changing families in the classroom through reading assignments or voluntary reading, children will soon realize that a changing family is something that can be talked about. At the secondary level teachers can provide networking among students who have recently experienced family change, thus building rapport among a student group facing common problems.

Giving Advice. Teachers are prone to give a student advice when the student is not necessarily wanting advice but rather is wanting somebody to listen. Giving advice implies to students that there is a clear-cut answer. They hear "I'm going to handle it for you." As a result they feel less competent to deal with the problem. Emotionally, a student may be unable to do what has been advised. Thus it is usually better to listen than to give advice. Being a good listener establishes a level of trust with a student. If a teacher violates that trust through faculty lounge gossip, that trust is betrayed. One negative experience for a student whose trust is violated can shut the doors to further communication.

Teacher Expectations. When facing family change, children need consistent discipline and clear expectations. A sensitive teacher will balance the demands of the classroom with the emotional stress exhibited by a student. However, teachers should avoid coddling these children to the extent that they become labeled "teacher's pet" by other children in the class.

What the teacher can do is provide direction in solving problems. Depending on the needs of a particular student, the teacher may offer such comments as: "These choices are available to you." "That's a good choice." "You're a good person." "Lots of people go through this, but you're doing a super job." Such statements affirm the student's ability to solve problems.

If a student actively seeks personal involvement from the teacher, or if the teacher feels the student is becoming too dependent, a referral to the school social worker or counselor might be necessary.

Avoiding Stigma. Children of family change often carry a stigma. Children may not recognize the word stigma, but they feel it when a relative or neighbor comments that divorce is a disgrace or that no one in their family has ever been divorced before. Schools also contribute to

the stigma when they sponsor father-son or mother-daughter banquets without giving any consideration to the fact that a student may not have a father or mother living at home. If a community persists in holding such events, a teacher can suggest to the student that alternative guests be invited, such as an older sibling, a relative, or adult friend. Stigma is also imposed when all children are assigned to make Mother's Day and Father's Day cards or when the text and photos in reading materials always refer to the stereotypical two-parent family. Teachers can counter such practices with factual information about other family forms. The concept to get across is that a family is complete if all members love each other and share each other's triumphs and heartbreaks, regardless of the family composition. It is therapeutic for children to know they are not in a minority.

Communicating with Parents. When a teacher is aware of family change that has an effect on a student's behavior, she can invite the parent to visit before or after school hours or even make a home visit. Such face-to-face communication provides much more helpful information than a phone call. This communication link lets the family know that the teacher cares and provides an opportunity to let the parent know of some of the community and school resources available to help the student adjust to the new family situation. After-school activities, youth groups, Big Brothers-Big Sisters, Boys Club, Girls Club, YMCA, YWCA, day camp, scholarships for enrichment activities, food stamp requirements, and neighborhood child care are all services that a parent may not be aware of because they were not needed previously.

This is also an opportunity to suggest to parents that their children become active in some community service project after school or on weekends. Participation in such fund-raising activities as walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons, or read-a-thons serves community causes and gives students something worthwhile to do. For older students, serving as volunteers for senior citizen homes or for organizations serving the handicapped gives them a sense of self-esteem while also providing valuable service to others.

Another form of communication to parents is through their children. Single parents do not have someone to remind their children to be thoughtful of them on holidays and birthdays. Teachers can suggest

ways for children to let their parents know they care: writing a letter or poem, baking brownies, doing something around the house or yard that is not usually done. And don't forget the non-custodial parent; they, too, need to be remembered on birthdays, holidays, and special occasions.

Suggestions for School Administrators

America's changing families present many challenges to school administrators. Frequently they find themselves confronted with situations in which decisions have to be made without clearly defined policies or procedures. Such decisions often involve legal matters related to student records, parental rights, and residence requirements. School administrators can play a key role in developing sound school policy for changing families and in developing awareness in both their staffs and their communities about the needs of changing families. Following are some suggestions for administrators on a number of issues related to changing families.

Inservice Program on Changing Families. At either the building level or district level, a well-planned inservice program can build awareness among the staff and provide them with the knowledge and resources they will need to deal with the problems of family change. This fastback could serve as one resource for such an inservice program. Also, personnel from community social agencies serving families in need would be good resources. Topics in the program might include: demographic data on changing families both national and local, the family change process, a review of children's developmental needs, and school and community support services for children and families.

Child Abuse Policy. Child abuse, both physical and sexual, is increasingly a factor in the breakup of families. Teachers are often the first to detect evidence of suspected child abuse, which, by law, must be reported in all states. Administrators should see that their schools have a written policy on reporting suspected child abuse. This topic, however unpleasant, should also be included in the inservice program (see fastback 172 *The School's Role in the Prevention of Child Abuse*).

Counseling Referrals. Most communities have agencies that offer counseling to parents, their children, or even the entire family. Fees are

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based on a sliding scale according to ability to pay or are free in some cases. Administrators should become familiar with the services of these agencies in order to inform teachers and other staff who make referrals when the family change problems of children are beyond the scope of the school's counseling services.

Adjudicating School Boundary Violations. Administrators often have to decide whether to allow children to remain in or return to their school when, as a result of family change, they no longer reside within the school attendance boundaries. Often during the initial period of separation or divorce, a child will live temporarily with a relative. Or a parent who is forced to move out of the school attendance area will not tell school officials and will drive across town in order not to disrupt the child from the stability that the school has provided. Each case of attendance area violation requires individual consideration. It is not always easy for the school administrator to ferret out all the facts when parents are deceptive; but by maintaining some flexibility, the administrator can offer a parent a boundary waiver if it is in the best interest of the child.

Protecting School Records. Schools must be careful not to breach the confidentiality of student records. Many states provide legal guidelines regarding student privacy and confidentiality. In addition, the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act gives parents access to their child's school records. In cases of joint custody, the administrator must be prepared to deal with each parent separately when they request reports of student grades, test scores, psychological evaluations, etc.

Providing Supplementary Student Services. School administrators can offer support to families that are in need of special services because of their changed status. Families with financial problems should be informed that school lunches are provided by federal funds if their income falls below a certain level. Many schools have some discretionary funds to pay for activity fees and supply expenses for indigent students. An open gym after school could provide a supervised activity for students of single parents who work. A school-sponsored annual clothing exchange would attract all families but would be especially helpful for those with lower incomes.

Providing Sources of Child Care. Finding reliable child care is a major concern of single-parent families. The school could help by pro-

viding a list of sitters in the neighborhood. To avoid liability, the school should make clear that it is not recommending these individuals; rather, it is simply a list of persons who have expressed an interest in child care. If the school does not provide its own activity program after school hours, the PTA might arrange with a nearby agency (usually a church) to provide after-school day care until parents are able to return from work.

School Secretaries. School secretaries can be a real asset to the school administrator when dealing with changing families. They are usually the first person in the school a parent has contact with when registering a child. An alert secretary, for example, can let a teacher know that John Jones and Sue Smith are siblings. They are also usually the first to know when there are any changes in family status, which could affect how the school responds to problems a child may have. Or the secretary might notice that a family has moved several times during the school year. This could be important information for the child's teacher. The school administrator should look to the school secretary as a prime source of information about families in the school.

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Legal Issues in the Family Change Process

My son was 17, an honor student in his senior year of high school. On the day our divorce was final, he asked, "Does this mean I'll be adopted or will I go to an orphanage?" He was serious.

—A recently divorced mother

The history of child custody dates back to Roman Law when the child was considered to be the physical property of the father and was to be provided for by him. If the father was deprived of the child, he was also absolved of any responsibility for child support. The Talfourds Act of 1839 in Great Britain broke the paternal preference tradition. At this time the "tender years presumption" was made legal and gave the court the power to decide the custody of children who were under seven years of age.

Maternal preference in child custody cases is a relatively recent development. In 1880 in the case of *Hart* v. *Hart* the court found that the mother was the best suited for the psychological care of the child, but it was not until 1900 that child support was granted for the child in maternal custody. The case of *Findlay* v. *Findlay* in 1925 established guidelines for custody based on "the best interests of the child." With this judicial precedent, a girl's custody was usually granted to the mother and a boy's custody was awarded to the father if the boy was over seven years old. In practice, the boy did not usually go to live with the father. (Children 12 years old and up are often allowed to state their parental preference.)

Currently, courts are moving away from maternal preference to a more neutral application of the guidelines. The Uniform Divorce and

Marriage Act provides legal guidelines for child custody decisions. It includes the following: 1) access to litigation to modify custody is prohibited for two years after the issuance of the custody decree (in the absence of serious harm to the child); 2) the court may appoint an attorney for the child in contested cases or in cases of concern for the best interests of the child; and 3) the court may order a custody investigation. Nevertheless, even with the legal guidelines, courts face a difficult task when trying to decide what is in the best interest of a child.

Both research and professional opinion support the position that children of divorce should maintain a relationship with both parents. However, there are problems in implementing this policy. When children feel concern and love for both parents, it is difficult to think of living apart from either of them. In custody cases where children are asked to decide what is the best placement for them, they might not state their true beliefs or may feel a responsibility to live with the parent who needs them the most. Such decisions impose unnecessary guilt on children.

In custody disputes the parent who is awarded custody generally meets the following criteria: 1) will encourage and allow flexible visitation with the non-custodial parent; 2) will be better able to establish and maintain ongoing relationships with the school, community, friends, and relatives of the child; and 3) will be better suited for dealing with continued growth and development of the child. When custody is in dispute, it should be resolved as soon as possible to avoid disrupting the child's life.

Joint Custody

My biggest frustration, after having been without the children for three months, is to all of a sudden become a parent overnight, to change a lifestyle that is much different with the children. When I don't have them, I stay at work longer, go play racquetball at six o'clock in the morning — these are things I can't do now.

—A man in his thirties
who has joint custody of his
two elementary school daughters

Joint custody is an alternative custody arrangement that gives children access to both parents. Practically, it means the child maintains a residence in both the mother's and the father's home. Legally, it means that both parents share in the rearing of their child.

Although joint custody is coming to be viewed favorably by the courts, there are potential problems in the arrangement that can affect the child's behavior in school. Living in two different homes can be disruptive for a child. A child bounced from parent to parent can become a pawn when the parents do not get along. The remarriage of one or both parents can drastically alter the emotional climate in a joint custody arrangement because of the influence of an additional adult. For joint custody to work, parents must separate past marital conflicts from their parental responsibilities and have a mutual concern for the welfare of the child.

In theory, joint custody is a good option for children; in reality, few parents are cooperative enough to make it a healthy living arrangement for their children.

Visitation Rights

Children who are able to have an on-going relationship with the non-custodial parent usually make a better adjustment to family change. Yet visitation can be a source of continuing conflict between former spouses, which in turn affects the emotional stability of the child at home and at school.

The divorce settlement may state the conditions for visitation, but in practice the frequency and length of the visitation usually is controlled by the custodial parent. An embittered parent may prevent the ex-spouse from seeing the child by not being home when the visit is scheduled or by making a long-distance move. Or the non-custodial parent may fail to show up for the visitation or may overindulge the child with gifts or special treats to compensate for being the absent parent. With any of the above actions, the child is the ultimate loser.

For the best interests of the child, visitations should be consistent, whether they are every week or every month. Visitations should not be used by either parent as a time for finding fault with each other or for expressing bitterness about past events. The visitation should be time

spent together in activities that do not depart too much from the normal routine.

Child Support

The reason that I don't want child support or alimony is I don't want him or anyone else to think that I need him. It's rough at times, but I do feel that I can make it on my own.

—A young mother of two boys

With divorce, it is common for the custodial parent's income to decrease by more than half. This can drastically affect the family's standard of living, sometimes requiring a move to cheaper housing and other adjustments. The non-custodial parent in most states is required to give up to, but not more than, one-third of his or her income for child support. A typical child support order is for $100 to $150 per child a month and is non-taxable. As of January 1985, the custodial parent can claim each child as a tax deduction unless otherwise stated in the divorce agreement.

Noncompliance with child support obligations is a serious social problem. Nationally, more than half of child support orders are not obeyed. While child support can be garnished from wages, and federal law now permits collection of overdue payments from income tax refunds, these recourses are slow and often impossible to implement.

With or without child support, most families of divorce must learn to cope with a substantial reduction in income.

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Adjustment Problems of Children Relating to Legal Issues in the Family Change Process

Teachers should be alert to children's and parents' behavior that might indicate problems stemming from visitation, custody, or other legal issues in the family change process. This section will identify some of the behaviors and offer suggestions for teachers and administrators.

Excitement. Children frequently exhibit an unusual degree of excitement as the visitation day of the non-custodial parent approaches, especially if there has been a long gap since the last visit. Sometimes this excitement is expressed by inattentiveness to school work.

Abrupt Mood Change. On returning from a visit to the non-custodial home, children may exhibit mood swings. A teacher is not likely to learn the reasons for this behavior, but it is most apparent in the week following visitation. Such mood changes usually subside quickly as children return to their normal routine

Absence. A prolonged absence could indicate that a child has gone to live with the other parent without the school being told, or that the child has been kidnapped after a visitation.

Parental Intrusion. When the non-custodial parent contacts the school to ask about his/her rights, it might be an indication that the custodial parent is failing to communicate with the former spouse about the child's progress or that the needs of the child are not being met.

Manipulation. Children soon realize they can play one parent against the other in order to gain their way. Love, gifts, trips, and parenting

practices are all fair game. Success with such tactics at home may prompt children to try similar tactics at school.

Suggestions for Teachers

Avoid Taking Sides. A teacher usually does not know all of the factors involved in a child's family change. While it may appear that one parent is clearly in the wrong, a teacher should never criticize that parent in front of the child or in any way suggest that the parent is unfit.

Parent Conferences. If all parties are agreeable, consider scheduling a conference with both the custodial and non-custodial parent to discuss what the school can do to help the child adjust to the changing family circumstances. A joint conference is preferable since information can be given to both parents at the same time and cannot be misconstrued. If a joint conference would be too stressful for the parents, invite them to separate conferences. Regardless of the circumstances of the divorce, the conference should convey to the parents that the school wants to support the child during the adjustment period.

Anticipate Visitation. Especially for younger children, the transition from one home to another after visitation can be a difficult period. If teachers are aware of visitation schedules, they can be supportive of the child during these transition periods.

Maintain Nonjudgmental Attitude. Sometimes a child will tell a teacher information that the teacher would rather not hear. To offer a judgment or to express shock or disapproval may shake the child's trust in the teacher. Unless it is an incident of child abuse, the teacher's role should be one of a sympathetic listener.

Changing Residence. For a variety of reasons, some children, when they reach their teen years, decide they want to change residence and live with their other parent. With such a change the student must adjust to new and different parental expectations and face the loss of a familiar home environment and friends. Sometimes these students seek the advice of a trusted teacher about the change. In such situations the teacher can make the student aware of the adjustments and counsel them to keep their options open in case they want to return to their original home.

Child's Manipulation. Teachers are often aware of a child manipu-

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lating his or her parents after divorce. This is difficult to call to a parent's attention directly. But if the parent seeks advice about general behavior problems, the teacher can steer the discussion to this specific problem and assist the parent by suggesting ways to cope.

Writing Assignments. A creative writing assignment on the positive attributes of their parents can be particularly helpful to students in this process of family change. Such an assignment helps students to clarify the role of the custodial and non-custodial parent and provides an opportunity to share different viewpoints and values.

Suggestions for Administrators

Administrators must deal with several legal issues relating to changing families, such as who has legal power to sign papers, release students from school, and meet medical emergencies. Following are some administrative policies to consider with regard to children of family change.

Releasing Children. Children should not be released from school to the non-custodial parent without the permission of the custodial parent. This can be considered kidnapping. Actually, kidnapping is more likely in the cases of joint custody, where the child can be released to either parent. There have been cases where one parent in a joint custody arrangement has taken the child from school and pirated them to another state.

Student Records. Non-custodial parents may view student records without the permission of the custodial parent. They may also request and receive a copy of their child's report card.

Visitation. Non-custodial parents may seek and receive permission to visit a child on school property. In some cases it may be the only place they are allowed to visit with their child. Problems arise if a child refuses to see the parent or if a court order prevents the parent access. In such cases, it might be best to seek an opinion from the school district's attorney.

Step-Parenting

I want him to love my children as if they were his own, but I find it impossible to have the same kind of love for his children.

—A stepmother

Today more than one-third of U.S. families are step-families. A viable step-family requires not only the successful adjustment of both spouses but also the adjustment of the children to the reconstituted family. And with the reconstituted family comes a network of new relatives.

The entrance of a step-parent into a previously single-parent family imposes new adjustments on children. Children now have to respond to the expectations of two adults, who may have different views of their parental roles. For example, a step-parent might spank a child for misbehaving, whereas the natural parent has always used verbal reprimands. Generally, the older children are, the greater their resistance to any new rules a step-parent may try to establish.

Children in a single-parent family tend to form a close bond with the custodial parent. With remarriage, a common occurrence when a disagreement arises is to see the original family band together to resist the demands of a step-parent. In a remarriage, the children may fear the intrusion of a step-parent. The fear of losing a close relationship with a single parent to another adult is real. Children must be reassured that their physical and emotional needs will continue to be met by their natural parent.

Another factor to consider is that step-siblings can change the birth

order when families are combined. An only child may become one of three children, or the oldest child may become the youngest. When children are combined in a step-family, new role definitions and territorial adjustments must be made. Generally, step-siblings report positive relationships. A step-sibling can be a great playmate, friend, or someone to look up to.

Individuals who remarry are highly motivated to make the marriage work. However, they often are reluctant to seek outside help for the adjustment problems that commonly create stress in the marriage. Studies show those step-families most likely to be successful are made up of younger parents, with children under 13, and never-before-married stepfathers. Never-before-married females are least likely to establish a successful step-parenting relationship. Also, when a single-parent family results from a death rather than divorce, there tends to be better adjustment with a step-parent.

Adjustment Problems to Step-Parenting

This section includes some indicators of children's behavior as they adjust to step-parenting and some suggestions for teachers and administrators.

Rejection. With the establishment of a step-family, some older children feel rejected because of their natural parent's attention to the new spouse and new younger step-siblings. Sometimes this rejection is real because the children are neglected. In such cases the child may request to live with the non-custodial parent or may run away.

Rivalry. Children may compete with the step-parent for the attention of the natural parent. Or they may resent the step-parent because of the loss of authority they had gained in the single-parent family.

Rebellion. When a step-parent enters the family, children may rebel against the imposition of new family rules. One common ploy is threatening to go to live with the non-custodial parent.

Incest. The most prevalent type of incest is between stepfathers and stepdaughters. Girls may fear reporting incest because of fear of reprisals by the stepfather or of fear of causing another divorce and making their natural mother unhappy.

Role Ambivalence. Some mothers, in their attempts to create a wholesome family atmosphere, want a stepfather to be called "Dad," or will try to get children to use his surname rather than their legal name. Children might feel this is being disloyal to their natural father.

Step-Sibling Disruption. Visits by nonresident step-siblings can cause disruptions in the normal family routine, causing jealousy and bickering within the step-family.

Suggestions for Teachers

Reassurance. Many of the same grief feelings children experienced at the time of separation-divorce may reoccur when they face the reality of the remarriage of the custodial parent. Parents may not acknowledge these feelings in their children because they are happy about the prospects of their new marriage. Teachers can help children by reassuring them that it is normal to have these feelings and that it will take time for a step-family to blend into a cohesive unit like the former family. Children can also be counseled about differences in expectations between their natural parent and step-parent and about changes in family financial practices and activities.

Incest. Suspicion of incest is required by law to be reported in most states. The same criteria regarding confidentiality apply for the reporting of incest as for child abuse.

Resources. When problems become apparent in a step-family, a teacher might suggest community resources that can help. Family counseling agencies, workshops on step-parenting, and such organizations as Tough Love that deal with hard-to-handle youths are examples.

Suggestions for Administrators

Legal Name. Children may unofficially use the name of a step-parent; but official documents, such as a diploma, should carry the legal name of the student. A non-custodial parent who is paying child support can bring suit against the school to require that the child's legal name be used on all school documents. For younger children for whom there is no child support and no contact with the father, the step-parent may wish to consider adoption proceedings, which would change the child's name legally.

School Directory. When the parent has a different last name than the child, it is helpful if the listing in the school directory carries the child's legal name first, followed by the step-parent's name in parentheses — John Smith (Jones). This practice is particularly helpful for elementary students since the school directory is used by room mothers, scout leaders, and others to contact the parents. Thus both the parent and the child can be addressed by their proper name.

Conclusion

When my Dad came to school the kids all asked if I had two mothers. I said I was lucky, I had two mothers and two fathers. That way I get lots of attention.

—A first-grade girl

Children experiencing family change undergo a complex process involving legal, social, economic, and psychological issues. Teachers have, and will continue to have, children in their classrooms who are at different stages of this process, and each child will react differently. Regardless of one's personal feelings about family change, there are no clear-cut answers as to whether the change is good or bad for the child. None of us knows what a child's life would have been like had separation, divorce, single-parenting, or step-parenting not occurred.

What teachers and administrators can do is become familiar with the process of family change, be aware of children's behavior that results from family change, and be prepared to assist the child in adjusting to the changed life situation. That is the purpose of this fastback.

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Resources

16mm Films

Amy and the Angel. 46 minutes, for junior high school to adult. (1982)
This film tells the story of a girl who considers suicide because of her parents' divorce and problems in her social life. It shows her gaining in self-esteem and new perspectives as she learns to solve her problems.
Learning Corporation of America, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019.

Divorce. 16 minutes, for grade 4 to adult. (1981)
Case studies are used to examine the impact of divorce on both children and adults. Problems, adjustments, and critical issues of divorce are examined.
Modern Learning Division, Ward's Natural Science, P.O. Box 1712, Rochester, NY 14603.

Divorce — A Teenage Perspective. 15 minutes, for junior high school to adult. (1983)
This film shows that teenagers need to develop an understanding of divorce in order to deal with their own relationships, values, and expectations for marriage.
MTI Teleprograms, 3710 Commercial Ave., Northbrook, IL 60062.

Divorce — And Other Monsters. 22 minutes, for elementary grades. (1981)
A young girl finds out that her parents' divorce is not her fault. She cannot make her parents love each other no matter how hard she tries.
Barr Films, 3490 E. Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107.

Divorce — For Better or for Worse. 49 minutes, for high school to adult. (1976)
This film examines some of the consequences of the increasing divorce rate, including counseling, poor legal advice, casual sex, heavy emotional and financial tolls, and the growing number of displaced homemakers.
McGraw-Hill Films, 674 Via De La Valle, P.O. Box 641, Del Mar, CA 92014.

Divorce and Young People. 18 minutes, for grades 4 to 9. (n.d.)
This film discusses coping with sorrow and emphasizes that communication is essential in families where divorce is imminent. It points out that divorce is not the end of a family but the regrouping of the family.
Perennial Education, 930 Pitner, Evanston, IL 60202.

The Empty Chair. 20 minutes, for grade 4 to adult. (1981)
This film deals with a Jewish mother's conflicts when celebrating her first Passover Seder after her divorce.
National Jewish Welfare Board, 15 East 26th St., New York, NY 10010.

Home Sweet Home: Kids Talk About Joint Custody. 20 minutes, for grade 4 to adult. (1983)
Five children, ages 8 to 12, talk about the adjustments required by joint custody and their preference for it.
Filmmakers Library, 133 East 58th St., Suite 703 A, New York, NY 10022.

Homecomin'. 28 minutes, for high school to adult. (1980)
A black couple works at maintaining communication after divorce for their child's psychological and emotional growth.
Phoenix/BFA Films and Video, 468 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016.

Jenny Koo Koo. 25 minutes, for elementary grades. (1982)
Two girls become friends and discover that both have lost their fathers. One father has died and the other left after a divorce.
Beacon Films, P.O. Box 575, 1250 Washington St., Norwood, MA 02062.

Just Like Me. 26 minutes, for elementary school to junior high. (1980)
Nicholas must accept the divorce of his parents and the remarriage of his mother. He discovers that other children also must make similar adjustments.
Lucerne Films, 37 Ground Pine Rd., Morris Plains, NJ 07950.

The Marianos. 9 minutes, for high school to adult. (1976)
This film examines a bitter custody battle for three children.
Films Incorporated, 733 Green Bay Rd., Wilmette, IL 60091.

Me and Dad's New Wife. 33 minutes, for elementary grades. (1976)
A seventh-grade girl discovers that her new math teacher is also her father's new wife. Her feelings about her parents' divorce are examined.
Time-Life Films, 100 Eisenhower Dr., P.O. Box 644, Paramus, NJ 07652.

My Father Sun — Sun Johnson. 28 minutes, for grades 4 to 9. (1977)
A young Jamaican boy tries to adjust to his parents' divorce and his father's remarriage.
Learning Corporation of America, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019.

Nancy and Her Friends. 16 minutes, for college students and adults. (1977)
This film follows the lives of three divorced women who gave up custody of their children.
Dave Vierra and Associates, 2333 Yale Blvd., Springfield, IL 62703.

Pick Me Up at Peggy's Cove. 25 minutes, for grades 4 to 9. (1982)
A boy intentionally gets into trouble in the hope of reuniting his parents.
Beacon Films, P.O. Box 575, 1250 Washington St., Norwood, MA 02062.

Princess. 15 minutes, for junior high school to adult. (n.d.)
This film examines the unhappiness a girl feels as a result of her parents' divorce and how her life is strengthened as time passes.
McGraw-Hill Films, 674 Via De La Valle, P.O. Box 641, Del Mar, CA 92014.

Say Goodbye Again: Children of Divorce. 26 minutes, for college students. (1981)
This film analyzes the impact of divorce on three families with children of different ages.
MTI Teleprograms, 3710 Commercial Ave., Northbrook, IL 60062.

Separation. 30 minutes, for college students and adults. (1981)
This film examines different types of separation experiences, including divorce, that are faced by children. It suggests strategies that parents can use to help their children cope with the anxieties caused by separation.
Films Incorporated, 733 Green Bay Rd., Wilmette, IL 60091.

The Single Parent Family. 42 minutes, for grade 4 to adult. (1981)
This film examines the problems and issues that children and their parents must deal with after a divorce.
Centron Educational Films, Coronet Films, 65 E. South Water St., Chicago, IL 60601.

Stepparenting: New Families, Old Ties. 25 minutes, for high school to adult. (1977)
This film focuses on the problems of being a step-parent and the ways in which families deal with these problems.
Polymorph Films, 118 South St., Boston, MA 02115.

Stepparenting Issues. 20 minutes, for college students. (n.d.)
Thirteen vignettes are used to illustrate the challenges faced by step-parents.
MTI Teleprograms, 3710 Commercial Ave., Northbrook, IL 60062.

Stop the World: Maggie Wants to Get Off. 30 minutes, for junior high to adult. (1983)
Feeling guilty because she assumes that she is responsible for her parents' divorce, Maggie runs into the street and is hit by a car. While she is recover-

ing, her friends, family, and counselor help Maggie to realize that the divorce was not her fault.
MTI Teleprograms, 3710 Commercial Ave., Northbrook, IL 60062.

The Way It Is, Black and White. 30 minutes, for grade 4 to adult. (1983)
This film examines the ways in which a 12-year-old girl deals with her parents' divorce.
Churchill Films, 662 N. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Filmstrips

Coping with Family Changes. 3 filmstrips, 3 cassettes, and a guide; for teenagers.
These filmstrips examine the changing roles of single-parent families and the complexities faced by step-parents and blended families. No. 441-NM.
Sunburst, 39 Washington Ave., Pleasantville, NY 10570.

Living with Trouble: Crisis in the Family. 3 filmstrips, 3 cassettes, and a guide; for teenagers.
These filmstrips examine the problems of three families: one in which a parent is an alcoholic, one in which a parent abuses the child, and one in which the parents' marriage is breaking up. Good suggestions are offered for dealing with these difficult problems. No. 2014-NM.
Sunburst, 39 Washington Ave., Pleasantville, NY 10570.

My Mother and Father Are Getting Divorced. 2 filmstrips, 2 cassettes, and a guide; for grades 5 to 9.
These filmstrips examine the effects of divorce on children and offer suggestions for solving problems during the initial stage of divorce. No. 2002-NM.
Sunburst, 39 Washington Ave., Pleasantville, NY 10570.

Surviving Your Parents' Divorce: A Teenager's Guide. 2 filmstrips, 2 cassettes, and a guide; for teenagers.
Six young people discuss their parents' divorces. No. 441-NF.
Sunburst, 39 Washington Ave., Pleasantville, NY 10570.

Single Parents: Coping Alone. filmstrip, cassette, and guide; for teenagers.
This filmstrip examines the special concerns, problems, and joys of the single parent. No. CA128C-85.
Current Affairs, Dept. 85, 10,000 Culver Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802.

Daddy Doesn't Live Here Anymore. 4 filmstrips, 4 cassettes, and a guide; for teenagers.
These filmstrips discuss the stresses that unexpected role changes bring to parents and children. Human Relations Media No. HRM-741.
Teaching Aids Incorporated, P.O. Box 1798, Costa Mesa, CA 92628-0798.

My Parents Are Getting Divorced. 2 filmstrips, 2 cassettes, and a guide; for teenagers.
These filmstrips examine the reasons for the high divorce rate. Human Relations Media No. HRM-618
Teaching Aids Incorporated, P.O. Box 1798, Costa Mesa, CA 92628-0798.

For a comprehensive list of films and filmstrips about family change, write to: NICEM, P.O. Box 40130, Albuquerque, NM 87196.

Books for Parents

There are many self-help books available for families who are experiencing change, and more books are published each year. These books listed below cover the broad range of family changes well.

Atlas, Stephen. *Single Parenting: A Practical Resource Guide.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981.
A book that deals with the realities of single parenting.

Colgrove, Melba; Bloomfield, Harold; and McWilliams, Peter. *How to Survive the Loss of a Love.* New York: Bantam, 1976.
A book on all kinds of loss that will help an individual to become active again.

Fisher, Bruce, *Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends.* San Ramon, Calif.: Impact Publishing, 1981.
Discusses the separation-divorce process in a constructive manner.

Gardner, Richard A. *The Boys and Girls Book About Divorce.* New York: Bantam, 1971.
A helpful book for children when discussing divorce.

Gardner, Richard A. *The Parents Book About Divorce.* New York: Bantam, 1977.
A helpful book for parents when discussing divorce with children.

Gardner, Richard A. *The Boys and Girls Book About One-Parent Families.* New York: Bantam, 1983.
A book for parents and children from grades 3 to 9. Discusses the realities of life in a one-parent family.

Grollman, Earl. *Talking About Divorce.* Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1975.
A well-illustrated book about feelings and divorce for young children to share with parents.

Kasserola, Irene. *Putting It All Together.* New York: Warner, 1973.
For parents who are not getting along and may be thinking about divorce.

Rofes, Eric. *Fayweather Street School Unit -- The Kids Book About Divorce.* New York: Random House, 1981.
By, for, and about kids.

Roosevelt, Ruth, and Lofas, Jeanette. *Living in Step.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977.
Deals with the realities of remarriage and the complex family ties that step-families must handle.

U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, and National Institute of Mental Health. *Yours, Mine & Ours: Tips for Stepparents.* DHEW Publication No. (ADM) 78-676. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978.

Visher, Emily B., and Visher, John S. *How to Win as a Stepfamily.* New York: Bembner Books, 1982.
A positive book that gives helpful suggestions for building a good relationship in a new step-family.

Books to Help Children Cope with Separation and Loss. New York: R.R. Bowker, (updated regularly).
Annotated lists of titles under death, divorce, etc. Age level, reading level, and interest level are provided.

Books for Children

The annotations for the books listed below were prepared by Barbara Chatton, College of Education, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming.

Books for Young Children

Berger, Terry. *A Friend Can Help.* (6-11). Milwaukee: Raintree Publisners, 1974.
A photographic essay about the role friends can play in talking about divorce.

Bradley, Buff. *Where Do I Belong: A Kids Guide to Stepfamilies.* (4-6). Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1982.
This book answers questions about step-families.

Clifton, Lucille. *Everett Anderson's Year.* (5-9), 1974. *Some of the Days of Everett Anderson.* (5-9), 1970. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
These collections of simple poems show Everett Anderson's world – loving his mother and missing his father.

Eichler, Margaret. *Martin's Father.* (4-8). Chapel Hill, N.C.: Lollipop Power, 1971.
One of the very few books showing the father in custody of the child.

Goff, Beth. *Where is Daddy? The Story of Divorce.* (4-8). Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
Janey-dear is frightened and confused when her parents separate but comes to understand that they both still love her.

Perry, Patricia, and Lynch, Marietta. *Mommy and Daddy Are Divorced.* (4-8). New York: E.P. Dutton, Dial Books for Young Readers, 1978.
A photographic story of a father's visits with his children stresses that he loves them even though he does not see them every day.

Simon, Norma. *All Kinds of Families.* (5-7). Niles, Ill.: Albert Whitman & Co., 1976.
A discussion of all types of families.

Sinberg, Janet. *Divorce Is a Grown Up Problem.* (4-7). New York: Avon Books, 1978.
A very simple coloring book discusses a child's feelings about divorce.

Sobel, Harriett. *My Other Mother, My Other Father.* (4-6). New York: Macmillan, 1979.
A photo essay on step-families.

Stein, Sara Bennett. *On Divorce.* (4-7). New York: Walker & Co., 1979.
An informational book with large type text for a young child plus words for parents on each page.

Books for Middle and Upper Elementary Children

Adler, C.S. *In Our House God Is My Brother.* (4-12). New York: Macmillan, 1984.
A good book for all.

Blume, Judy. *It's Not the End of the World.* (8-12). New York: Bantam, 1977.
Tracks a family through the initial stages of divorce, citing Gardner's book to help explain the stages.

Burch, Robert. *Ida Early Comes Over the Mountain.* (9-12). New York: Avon, 1982.
Four motherless children learn about the real meaning of "family" from their exuberant sitter.

Green, Constance C. *A Girl Called Al.* (10-14). New York: Dell, 1977.
Al lives with her mother, a busy career woman, but discovers her gifts through her friendship with a neighbor girl, a teacher, and the building maintenance man.

Klein, Norma. *Taking Sides.* (10-14). New York: Random House, Pantheon, 1974.

When her parents divorce, Nell wishes she and her brother could be split too, and each could go with the best-loved parent.

LeShan, Eda. *What's Going to Happen to Me? When Parents Separate or Divorce*. (8-16). New York: Scholastic, 1978.
A clear discussion of common fears and anxieties that children may experience when parents separate.

Mann, Peggy. *My Dad Lives in a Downtown Hotel*. (7-10). New York: Doubleday, 1973.
Joey feels anger and guilt when his parents separate, but their loving acceptance of him helps him to adjust to his new circumstances.

Newfield, Marcia. *A Book for Jodan*. New York: Atheneum, 1975.
Jodan and her mother move to California, but her father's gift of a special book helps her to accept their separation.

Smith, Doris Buchanan. *Kick a Stone Home*. (10-13). New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
Sara is a competitive tomboy trying to deal with a working mother, her father's remarriage, and her awakening adolescence.

Books for Young Adults

Bridgers, Sue Ellen. *Home Before Dark*. New York: Bantam, 1977.
Stella's search for a place to belong and a sense of herself as her family moves, her mother dies, and her father contemplates remarriage.

Farris, Susan. *No Scarlet Ribbons*. New York: Avon, 1981.
This book is primarily for females.

Hunt, Irene. *William*. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1977.
An "alternate family" comes to accept both the strengths and weaknesses of its members.

Kerr, M.E. *If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?* New York: Dell, 1973.
Alan attempts reconciliation with a father he has never known.

Kerr, M.E. *Is That You, Miss Blue?* New York: Harper & Row, 1975.
A young girl turns to a teacher when she feels abandoned by her parents.

Kerr, M.E. *Love Is a Missing Person*. New York: Dell, 1975.
Suzy attempts to cope with various aspects of love and separation when her family suffers upheavals.

Mazer, Harry. *The Dollar Man*. New York: Dell, 1974.
Marcus daydreams about his long-lost father. This prevents him from appreciating his mother's strength and love for him.

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Peck, Richard. *Father Figure*. New York: Viking, 1978.
Jim acts as a father figure for his younger brother until his mother dies and he is confronted by his own relationship to the father they have hardly known.

Community Resources

Child Find
P.O. Box 277
New Paltz, New York

Contact this organization if a parental kidnap is suspected.

Parents Anonymous
Hot Line Telephone Number: 1-800-442-2824

This resource will assist parents who fear they are losing control of their children and will give them someone to talk to immediately.

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
924 West Ninth Street
Upland, California 91786

Representatives of this organization will come to your group to offer training for handling different types of youth problems.

Association of Family Conciliation Courts
c/o Nova University Law Center
3100 Southwest Ninth Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33315

Pamphlets on visitation, step-parenting, and other topics are available.

Parents Without Partners
Check your local directory for the organization closest to you.

New Beginnings

Nondenominational support group for individuals who are experiencing or have experienced divorce. Under auspices of the Catholic Church, it sponsors retreats and activities for children and adults.

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